Site: Martin Co.
Break: 2.10
Other:

85486

POLREP NUMBER 10
KENTUCKY/WEST VIRGINIA COAL SLURRY SPILL
MARTIN COUNTY COAL CORPORATION
INEZ, KENTUCKY

DATE: NOVEMBER 9, 2000

TO: DOUG LAIR, EPA REGION IV
CHARLIE KLEEMAN, EPA REGION III

FROM: DOUG STROUD, REGION IV OSC
ROBERT KELLY, REGION III OSC

I. BACKGROUND

A. At approximately 0200 hours on Wednesday, 11 October 2000, an estimated 250 million gallons of coal mine fine refuse slurry were released from a 72-acre impoundment operated by Martin County Coal Corporation (MCCC). The release occurred as a result of a sudden and unexpected breach into an underground mine adjacent to MCCC's refuse impoundment. The slurry entered both the Wolf Creek and Rockcastle Creek watersheds of Martin County, Kentucky. The spilled material has impacted more than 75 miles of surface water downstream of the site, including both the Tug Fork and Levisa Fork of the Big Sandy River, a tributary of the Ohio River. The Tug Fork and Big Sandy Rivers border both West Virginia and Kentucky.

B. Several potable water and industrial intakes have been affected as a result of the spill.

C. A Joint Information Center (JIC) has been established on site. The JIC serves to issue joint press releases from EPA, the state of Kentucky and MCCC. The OSC requests that all media inquiries be directed to the JIC at (606) 395-0353 or the EPA OSC at (606) 395-5395.

II. CURRENT ACTIVITIES (1700 HOURS, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2000)

Weather: Weather conditions have degraded with rain showers entering the region. There continues to be concerns over possible flooding and migration of the slurry should a significant rain event occur. A Precipitation Action Plan has been developed for a major storm event and has been approved by the Unified Command.

A. West Virginia:

1. The town of Fort Gay and Kermit, WV continues to receive water from alternate sources. The town of Kenova, WV continues to receive water from the Big Sandy River and is supplying water to all of its customers as well as to the Big Sandy Water District, Don Acres, Kenova, Ceredo, Ridgelawn, Buffalo, Centerville, and Prichard.

2. On 03 November 2000, a meeting was held at the Fort Gay Incident Command Post to discuss issues to be raised at the Unified Command concerning West Virginia interests. Representatives from Region III EPA, START Region III, WVDNR, WVDEP and WVDOH attended the meeting.

3. WVDNR continues to investigate the damage to the fish population in the Tug Fork River. They requested a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) be conducted. Since they are a Trustee, OSC Kelly advised them to contact Region III DOI and formally request the assessment.

4. The Environmental Unit of the Unified Command received the results from the Pool Sampling and are currently reviewing them to determine if dredging these areas would be feasible.

5. The Unified Command is currently investigating long term alternatives to supply water to Fort Gay and Kermit WTP's.

B. Kentucky:

1. The water treatment plant in Louisa, KY is operational and supplying 100% of their customers, Big Sandy, and Ft. Gay. Louisa has more than 1 million gallons of water in storage. All advisories have been lifted. Louisa is supplying 1.3 million gallons per day.

2. Inez, KY continues to pump from the Middle Fork Creek. Production is back to the normal 1.4 mgd and they are slowly replenishing their reservoir.

C. MCCC continues to respond to the spill 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with their company and subcontractor resources. The company reports 360 personnel and contractors are responding. Federal and State agencies continue to support and provide guidance to the companies response team (ICS). Federal, state and local agencies represented on-scene include:

Federal: EPA Region IV (OSCs Fred Stroud, Art Smith), EPA Region III (OSC Robert Kelly), EPA ERT (Greg Powell), USCG Strike Team, U.S. DOL-MSHA, U.S. DOI-OSM, U.S. Army COE, EPA START Contractor

State: KYDNREPC (Tom Gabbard), KY Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Kentucky Dept. for Surface Mining and Reclamation (KY DSMRE), KY Emergency Management

Local: Martin County EMA

D. An estimated 18 millions gallons of slurry has been pumped into the impoundments. Ongoing operations in Coldwater and Wolf Creek watersheds are as follows:

Coldwater Creek:

- Cleanup operations continue using lime for solidification and mechanical recovery to remove slurry from several areas along the creek. Mechanical recovery continues in the yards of private residences. MCCC continues to obtain access from private homeowners in order to remove sludge.

- The 6 "cornfield" sedimentation cells that were constructed along the creek to collect slurry are now being used to solidify sludge. The sludge is then transported to mountain top cells.

- Crews continue to pump slurry and water from the original creek channel to an impoundment cell at the Cain Property using an 18" pump. The slurry is treated with a flocculate to speed the sedimentation process.

- Crews continue to divert portions the Lynn Bark Creek, a tributary to Coldwater Creek, into a different watershed. Pumping operations began on 11/3.

- Areas have been cleared for the construction two sediment ponds in the creek between the south portal and the Gate 4 Bridge.

- Crews are beginning mechanical recovery operations in areas above the Gate 4 Bridge.
- A freshwater impoundment has been constructed on the Walnut Fork of Coldwater Creek. Water collected in this impoundment will be used for dust control and the hydroseeders.

Wolf Creek/Big Andy Creek Tributary:

- Cleanup operations continue to use pumps and vac trucks to pump slurry from the original creek channel and to sedimentation impoundment cells. MCCC will be submitting plans for the construction of two additional impoundment cells.

- The "south side" sedimentation cells that were constructed to collect slurry are now being used to solidify sludge.

- Piping has been laid to divert Panther Creek, a tributary of Wolf Creek, through a railroad tunnel into a different watershed. Pumping operation initially began on Sun day, 11/5/00, but have since ceased due to mechanical difficulties. Pumping is expected to begin again on 11/9/00. Crews are currently constructing piping to divert the Cal Fork of Wolf Creek into a different watershed.

- Mechanical removal continues where Maynard Creek enters Wolf Creek. A dredge has been placed in Wolf Creek to remove slurry.

- Crews continue to use a Hydroseeder pump and water to remove sludge for the creek banks. Four additional hydroseeders are expected to arrive this week.

- Crews are beginning to move downstream and removal sludge from the yards of private homes.

- Crews have completed the two downstream Gabion weirs and will be removing old sediment filters.

- Excavation continues in old solidified slurry cells adjacent to the slurry impoundment that failed. These cells will be used to store sludge from the Big Andy/Wolf Creek operations.

- Crews are currently working to rebuild the county road along Wolf Creek after it washed out when an impoundment on Big Andy Creek was intentionally released.

E. The Riverbank Assessment Cleanup Survey (RACS) Team is being formed using personnel from ERT, US Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Kentucky, and MCCC. RACS will determine cleanup criteria along Wolf Creek following a detailed assessment.

F. START Contractor has demobilization 1 person to Atlanta and the VHF Repeater Antenna. 3 START Region IV personnel and 1 START Region III person remain on-site.

G. The Unified Command met with officials from Martin County and the Martin County Emergency Management Agency to review site activities and the Precipitation Action Plan.

III. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

A. Continue remediation efforts include pumping and solidifying slurry from both watersheds. Solidification to continue using lime and mechanical methods will be used to excavate the sludge.

B. Crews will continue working downstream excavating sludge from private yards and seed for erosion control.

C. Construction on new sedimentation impoundment cells will continue.